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Communication Perception of Individuals with Aphasia by Speech-Language Therapists and Relatives

Leticia Mansur^{a,*}, Fernanda Marchezini^a, Marcela Silagi^a^a University of São Paulo. Faculty of Medicine. Laboratory of Research in Neurological Disorders - Adults and Elderly

Introduction

In Brazil, cerebrovascular accident is one of the principal causes of mortality and morbidity, including the aphasias that affect approximately one-third of the patients who survive a vascular incident. The evaluation of communication is important in order to measure the impact of the aphasia on social relations and functionality of the individual. The perception that relatives have of aphasia is important to outline communication intervention programs. The Functional Questionnaire about the Evolution of Aphasia (QEF-A, Ketersen et al., 2008) was created to obtain data about the caregiver, regarding the daily functioning of the individual with aphasia, and to assist in outlining programs of social inclusion, based on this partnership between therapists and relatives. The objective of the study is to observe the congruence of the responses given by the caregiver and therapist, relative to aphasic communication in the chronic phase.

Methods

Caregivers and speech-language therapists of persons with aphasia responded to the QEF-A about the communication of the patients. The speech-therapists used video as an additional resource, registering the interaction between caregiver and patient in order to supplement the questionnaire.

Results

Caregivers of 12 individuals with aphasia and 2 speech-language therapists comprised the sample; 89% were diagnosed with Broca's aphasia and 11% with global aphasia. There was no difference in perception of caregivers and therapists about the presence/absence of difficulties related to the four domains of the questionnaire (Basic Needs, Routine Requests, New Information, and Attention and Other Communication Skills). There were differences in responses only in the perceived frequency of difficulties in making Routine Requests through gestures ($p=0.023$), a domain in which the caregivers interpreted a greater frequency of gestural behavior than was observed by the speech-therapists. The factorial analysis identified two factors that differentiated caregivers and the speech-therapists with regard to frequency of difficulties: *basic necessities disclosed by gestures and routine requests verbally disclosed*. These factors explained 70% of the variability. Relative to the identification of the presence/absence of difficulties, two factors were selected, indicating that they are able to explain little more than 87% of all of the variability of the block formed by variables of interest: *basic necessities disclosed by gesture mode and verbal mode*.

Discussion

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: lmansur@usp.br.

We observed high congruence between the answers of the caregivers and the speech-language therapist evaluators about the functional communication of individuals with chronic phase aphasia. The incongruence of perception between caregivers and speech-therapists about the use of the gesture mode can be associated with the fact that gestures are less conventional than verbal language, and agreement regarding attribution of meaning needs to be established, thus the caregivers have the advantage in this domain. On the other hand, this incongruence is not consistent when using the gesture mode in all of the domains. The high congruence in the responses between the speech-language therapists and relatives signals the possibility of intervention based on the perception of the speech-therapists, in this sample, as it reflects the view of those who participate in the daily lives of the aphasics.

Reference

Keterson, T. U., Blonder, L. X., Donovan, N. J., Glueckauf, R. L., Gustafson, D. J., Rodriquez, P. D., Ley, C., Gonzalez-Rothi, L. J. (2008). Reliability and validity of the Functional Outcome Questionnaire for Aphasia (FOQ-A). *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 53(2), 215-223.